

"It's good to be outside doing something every day."

- Frank DeTemple, Fern Prairie farmer

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PHOTOS BY CLARICE KEATINGE/POST-RECORD

Brothers Frank and Charlie DeTemple (left to right) have been living off the fruits of their Fern Prairie land all their lives. They also grow vegetables and raise beef cattle.

Roots run deep in local soil

□ Longtime Fern Prairie farmers Frank and Charlie DeTemple team up with neighbors to offer fresh produce at stand

By Clarice Keatinge
Post-Record staff

Time moves slower here. While technology, population growth and world politics fly forward, the DeTemple brothers stay in the here and now. When millions of urbanites are stuck in traffic, rushing from meetings to soccer practice to appointments, Frank and Charlie are taking one thing at a time.

Pull weeds. Pet the dog. Call the cattle for feeding time. Harvest a perfect, red garden tomato and then eat it.

Until a few decades ago, this was life in Fern Prairie. How things have changed.

"He used to go to town in a horse and buggy," said 83-year-old Charlie, pointing at his older brother Frank, who is 87. "I guess I did too, but I was so young I don't remember it."

Emma and Frank DeTemple Sr. bought the Fern Prairie house where the men now live in 1922, when Frank Jr. was 2. Charlie was born in the house three years later. Their parents were chicken farmers, and both men grew up helping in the garden, and milking and feeding the family cows - they grew up working the land.

Both brothers fought in World War II and came home to Camas. Frank worked at the paper mill and retired in 1982. Charlie stayed and took care of the farm and their parents.

That was then, and this is now, and not much has changed in the day-to-day lives of the DeTemples. The two men still live in the same house and they spend their days working in the garden, mowing the yard, raking leaves, raising cattle and cultivating hay.

Now that they're in their 80s, they don't get up quite as early as they were expected to as youngsters.

"I couldn't even catch a school bus these days," Charlie said.

But the two brothers attribute their land and life to their longevity.

"It's good to be outside doing something every day," Frank said. "Maybe that's why I'm as old as I am."

"You're not old!" Charlie said, sitting on the patio in the shade, while the farm dog Bear sits a few feet away chewing on an unripe cantaloupe sto-

len from the garden.

"OK, then that's why I am as young as I am," Frank conceded.

Their circle of friends is certainly getting younger.

Four years ago, neighbors, Melissa McGuffin and her family, moved into a house on 6 acres adjacent to the DeTemple's 40-acre farm and ranch to get out of the city hustle and bustle.

The farming lifestyle was novel and exciting to the McGuffins. They had baby goats penned in the kitchen, and Melissa planted a huge garden.

The two families have now joined forces with a few other Fern Prairie farmers to sell chemical-free, fresh-picked produce at a farm stand Mondays and Wednesdays, from 4 to 7 p.m., at 1919 N.E. 232nd Ave., near Lacamas Lake.

Melissa mans the booth, which sits on an unripe cantaloupe's throw from the DeTemples' huge garden. An errant child runs from the direction of the brothers' house, oatmeal cookie in hand.

"Where did you get that cookie?" Melissa asked her child.

It is the fruits of a too-easy-for-young-hands-to-reach cookie jar in the DeTemples' kitchen was the answer, offered begrudgingly. Charlie just laughed at the pack, with muddy feet from playing in the creek.

"It's too bad all kids can't be like Melissa's kids on the farm," Charlie said.

The stand draws neighbors from all over Fern Prairie to buy the fresh produce, as well as parents and employees from Melissa's children's schools. Lots of catching up on the latest goings on takes place inside the walls of the converted shed.

They sell tomatoes, zucchinis, summer squash, cucumbers, peas, cauliflower and whatever else is in season. Dan Dee Farm also contributes organic onions and garlic to the stand.

They plan to stay open, weather permitting, through the end of October.

McGuffin hopes to create a farm loop, similar to the one in Hood River, in which visitors can access a map to tour several farms in the area.

To get involved or for more information about the stand, contact McGuffin at 904-8499.



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A partnership between the DeTemples, Melissa McGuffin and other local farmers has led to a farm stand, which stocks local farm-fresh produce every Monday and Wednesday, from 4 to 7 p.m., at 1919 N.E. 232nd Ave. Dan Dee Farm Naturals (also in Fern Prairie) grows the organic onions and garlic sold at the stand (below).

